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SPECULATION ENDS, HIMANTA BISWA SARMA TO BE ASSAM CM

Sarma was elected as the leader of the Legislature Party after the outgoing CM Sarbananda Sonowal proposed his name

HELPED BJP MAKE INROADS INTO NORTHEAST

Sarma (52) will take the oath of office on Monday. He was the convener of the North-East Democratic Alliance, a BJP-led front of anti-Congress parties, and Number 2 to Sonowal since 2016. Under his stewardship, the BJP made inroads into the Northeast and became the second party to form successive governments in Assam after its victory in 2021 Assembly election | P8

STRATEGIST REWARDED FOR RESULTS

- He established himself as BJP's chief strategist in Northeast after snatching power from right under the Congress' nose in Manipur
- Along with Sonowal, Sarma was a contender for the top job in Assam. His elevation is seen as recognition of his work and skills
- The NEDA had won 75 seats in the house of 126 in the recent polls

6 yrs

SINCE SARMA QUIT THE TARUN GOGOI-LED CONGRESS IN 2015 AND JOINED THE BJP

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Micro-planning needed for vax drive: Experts

The inoculation drive should be streamlined to ensure there are no hiccups, they say

IFFATH FATHIMA & RANJANI MADHAVAN @ Bengaluru

WITH vaccine supplies trickling in for the largest population segment, comprising those in the 18-44 age bracket, experts have warned the State Government to streamline the vaccination process and micro-manage it to ensure completion of the vaccination drive without hiccups. They have also called for putting in place a strong containment strategy alongside.

This follows major hiccups in vaccination supplies witnessed in the phase-2 of the drive wherein senior citizens had to face problems due to a sudden shortage of stocks with private medical centres and hospitals being asked to directly place orders with vaccine manufacturers. Not only did the situation create anxiety among those scheduled for their second dose, it also delayed administering the first dose to those in the 45-60 age-group. This has resulted in delays in the vaccination programme.

While the number of those vaccinated should have been far higher, had the supplies been without hiccups, Karnataka has so far vaccinated a total of 1,05,21,773 people since the programme was initiated on January 16 this year.

The state's population (as of October 1, 2020) is 6,66,27,000. So far, population segment which has the highest coverage is the 45-60 age bracket, with 37,22,263 getting the first dose and 4,42,409 getting their second dose. The seniors (aged above 60) are the next biggest segment. So far, 35,90,825 have received the first dose while 9,77,935 have received the second shot. At least 6,91,102 health care workers received the first dose and 4,47,584 have got the second one. Among frontline workers, 4,60,941 have had their first dose and 1,78,086 have got the second.

It is estimated that there are about 3.26 crore people in the state in the 18-45 age group, requiring 6.52 crore doses to cover both doses. Only 10,627 have received their first dose in this segment which was symbolically launched on May 1. To fulfill the requirements, the state government has placed an order for two crore doses of Serum Institute's Covishield and one crore doses of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. P5

VACCINATIONS FOR 18+ FROM TODAY

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar on Sunday said vaccination for the 18-44 age group will start in earnest on May 10. "Covid-19 vaccination will be provided to citizens in the 18-44 age group at all major government hospitals and medical colleges from Monday, May 10. All centres providing vaccination for this age group will have an exclusive session site earmarked for them. Vaccine will be provided to only those who have registered and who have scheduled an appointment on the CoWIN portal and Arogya Setu."

A family of migrant workers leaves Bengaluru with their belongings on Sunday, a day prior to the two-week lockdown which comes into effect from May 10. The lockdown follows 10 days of Corona Curfew | SHRIRAM BN

DK DIST HOME TO 50 CONTAINMENT ZONES

With a surge of Covid cases being reported from Dakshina Kannada district on a daily basis, the number of containment zones has been increased to over 50. According to the district health department report, most of the new cases are from Mangaluru City and Bantwal taluk. Given the situation, Mangaluru now has the most number of containment zones at 30, followed by Bantwal with 17. The task force members are motitoring these two zones.

NATIONWIDE	MAY 8	MAY 9
Fresh cases	4,01,078	4,03,738
Recoveries	3,18,609	3,86,444
Deaths	4,187	4,092

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

MAY 8 **18,93,258 doses**

MAY 9 **6,71,646 doses**

TOTAL: 17,01,53,432

KARNATAKA	MAY 8	MAY 9
Fresh cases	47,563	47,930
Recoveries	34,881	31,796
Deaths	482	490

Across the state

5,64,485 TOTAL ACTIVE CASES

32.71% POSITIVITY RATE

1,05,21,773 TOTAL VACCINATIONS ACHIEVED SO FAR

In Bengaluru, a Ward Decentralised Triage and Emergency Response (DETER) Committee has been formed in BBMP limits to curbs cases at the ward level

DOUBLE WHAMMY

PRESENT TENSE FOR BHOPAL TWINS

ANURAAG SINGH @ Bhopal

IN a dilapidated double storey house in Budhwara, a thickly populated lower middle class area of Old Bhopal, twin girls aged five suddenly start wailing and ask for their parents. "Where is our papa and mummy, when will they return, have they gone to God?" they ask.

Family members immediately rush in, consoling the twins that things will be fine and their parents are likely to return soon. But return they will not as Mohan and Rita Barve, the girl's parents, fell prey to Covid-19 in quick succession.

"We have to lie to my nieces everyday when they ask us about their parents. I don't know how long we will able to hide the truth that their parents will never return," said Mankesh Raikwar, the twins' maternal uncle who has taken the responsibility of taking care of the girls. "Along with their parents, they had also tested Covid positive, but they are fine now," he added.

Mohan, 42, was an electrician with a semi-government herbal products plant in Bhopal's Barkheda Pathani area. Sometime last month he started getting fever, but instead of getting himself tested for Covid, he continued to take medicines from a personal doctor.

His condition suddenly worsened on April 28 and he had shortness of breath. Raikwar rushed him to the state government-run Hamidia Hospital, where he was put on oxygen support. But two days later despite the best efforts of doctors, Mohan succumbed to the infection.

By the time Mohan was hospitalised, his wife Rita and the twin daughters, too, had tested positive. Five days later on May 3, Rita, who was being treated in isolation at her parents' old home, also died. "I had gone to immerse Mohan's ashes in the river Narmada in the neighbouring Hoshangabad district on May 3. While returning home I got a call that my sister Rita had also passed away," said Raikwar.

But the future is tense for Raikwar's family of four and the twins as they are living on borrowed money. An auto-rickshaw driver, Raikwar has not earned a penny in the past 15 days owing to the lockdown.

"I have already borrowed ₹40,000 and will have to borrow more to take care of four kids now. My two other sisters, who live in Bhopal and Burhanpur, are willing to take care of the twin nieces, but my 75-year-old mother doesn't want to leave her granddaughters," he said. "Neither my sister nor my brother-in-law would have ever thought they would depart from this world in a matter of days. But we will take care of their daughters as long as we can," Raikwar added.

The twins are not the only children who have been orphaned in the current Covid surge. More cases of both parents dying of Covid are surfacing, leaving behind dependent children. There are anecdotal reports of some of them even being abandoned and left to fend for themselves.

CONTINUED ON: P7

COVID'S ORPHANS

PART-I

NCPCR seized of the matter

On May 2, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights drew the attention of all states to children orphaned due to Covid-19, saying those abandoned or in need of care must be produced before Child Welfare Committees

Worry as Covid kills many among AMU faculty

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE deaths of at least 16 serving and 18 retired teachers, besides other staff of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), due to Covid-19 in the past 18 days have triggered an alarm, with the Vice-Chancellor on Sunday urging the ICMR to study the infection variant on the campus.

In a letter to the ICMR, Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor said "a particular variant may be circulating in areas around the AMU campus and surrounding localities, which has led to these deaths". The latest to fall to the virus was the dean of the AMU's law faculty, Prof Shakeel Samdani, who died at Aligarh's Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College on Friday.

Mansoor said the microbiology lab at the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College would send samples to the Institute of Genomic and Integrated Biology, New Delhi, for genome sequencing of the variants detected in the town. Meanwhile, the medical college Principal Shahid Ali Siddiqui told media that 25 doctors at the hospital had tested positive for the infection in the past fortnight.

According to the V-C, three doctors were under treatment, while others had recovered. Meanwhile, the college principal claimed the hospital was battling oxygen shortage and was dependent on its three plants. The hospital has not received a single oxygen cylinder from outside in the past 12 days despite continuous efforts, he said. CONTINUED ON: P8

20 more deaths in 24 hours at Ch'nagar hospital

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

IN yet another shocker, the Chamarajanagar District Government Hospital, which has come under intense scrutiny after 24 people died due to shortage of oxygen recently, recorded 20 more deaths in a span of 24 hours. Of them, 15 died during the day on Sunday alone. These include 15 Covid-19 patients who succumbed to the disease, and five non-Covid patients who had comorbidities.

With the State Government already ordering an inquiry by a retired judge, and the Karnataka Lokayukta launching a separate probe into the deaths of 24 people, both the hospital authorities and the district administration are tight-lipped.

On Sunday, Chamarajanagar district registered 930 new Covid-19 cases while 561 patients were discharged. The district has 4,748 active cases. Sources pointed out that of the total tests being conducted, about 36 per cent of samples are testing positive, indicating a rapid spread of the coronavirus in rural areas. On Sunday, 2,553 tests were conducted of which a majority of samples from villages turned positive. The virus spread and the increasing number of deaths in recent days has created panic among the people.

Surprisingly, two villagers tested positive in the remote Padasulanatha and Nagamalai hamlets atop Male Mahadeshwara Hills, which have no transportation facilities or contact with outsiders. This has sent shocks waves among the tribal community in the region. P5

HOME CONFUSION

Over 1.5 crore houses fall outside village maps, remain illegal

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

WHILE villages and towns are pushing borders and growing extensions, administration and governance still depends on old village maps, many dating back to the early Independence era.

This anomaly has resulted in about 1.2 crore legitimate properties lying within the legal village and gramathana boundaries, but about 1.5 crore houses and residential units falling outside the "legitimate boundaries" of villages. With residents using all amenities like village roads, water and power, the onus is on the administration to bring this humongous number of properties on to legitimate maps, and give them legal recognition.

The Svamitwa Scheme, recently inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been formulated to address these issues. While Union Government authorities have said that panchayats will receive money and support to implement this scheme, experts say they have not addressed the practical challenges of the issue.

The anomaly has resulted in about 1.2 crore legitimate properties lying within legal village boundaries, but 1.5 crore houses falling outside the boundaries | FILE

Most of these new properties are given ad hoc papers and identities, and survive on documents like 'Form 10', and need to be regularised, say officials in the survey department.

"Every 15-20 years, the number of houses in villages almost doubles, as children move out and build their own homes. This phenomena is seen in rural and urban areas. Yet, over the past 70 years, most town and village maps have not been redrawn to legitimise the 'illegal' houses in these extensions. Technically, they fall outside the town or village," say survey department experts.

Most survey maps show that houses in extensions often outnumber the legitimate houses within the legal village or town boundaries.

This issue was taken up by the State government with the Union Government last September, but the Centre failed to comprehensively address it, say officials. "The Union government only said they would give legal papers to those within the map boundaries, but failed to address the issue of new houses in extensions. The Centre said State governments must take up the issue," said an official. P5

Helping people through the healthcare maze

MUKESH RANJAN @ Ranchi

IT was the call of humanity that prodded businessman Babu Khan (36) to reach out to Covid patients swarming the Sadar Hospital at Hazaribagh here, desperately looking for hospital and medical assistance. He found them in panic as they did not know how to get hospital beds or an oxygen cylinder or how to approach a doctor in case of an emergency, and decided to offer help.

Twenty-two days and 175 cured patients later, Babu continues his selfless service, even giving up the warmth and comfort of his family during the holy month of Ramzan.

"I assist the needy in all ways possible. From getting beds to securing oxygen to arranging free medicine for the needy, I do everything in my power," Babu said. His day begins at 11.30 am, and he helps people landing at the hospital till 5.30 pm, after which he goes to a nearby flat where he has been staying for the past 20 days to break Roza. He returns around 7.30 pm and continues with his work till 3 am when he goes back for Sehri.

Babu Khan at Hazaribagh Sadar Hospital

Babu, who has put his business on hold, said he has not seen his wife and three children since the last 22 days ago. "They are worried for me. I keep in touch via video calls," he said. What about his own safety? Babu said he takes abundant care. "I wear gloves, masks and take a bath before entering my flat. I sanitise myself regularly, too," he said.

Babu's service came in for praise from hospital Superintendent Dr Vinod Kumar, who said: "He does not hesitate to call us over phone in case of emergency."

EXPRESS READ

Sculptor Raghunath Mohapatra dies at 78

Bhubaneswar: Rajya Sabha MP Raghunath Mohapatra, who is also one of the leading stone sculptors of India, breathed his last on Sunday at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, days after he tested positive for Covid-19, an official at the hospital said.

Chinese rocket debris crashes into ocean

Beijing: The remnants of China's biggest rocket crashed into the Indian Ocean on Sunday with no reports of damage. Beijing was slammed by NASA for failure to meet standards about space debris.

US Navy seizes arms likely bound for Yemen

Dubai: The US Navy announced that it seized an arms shipment of assault weapons, machines guns and sniper rifles hidden aboard a ship in the Arabian Sea, apparently bound for Yemen to support the country's Houthi rebels.

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